Import of edible oil

*18. SHRI PRAKASH JAVADEKAR: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government has decided to import 1 million tonnes of edible oil for distribution to the poor through PDS with subsidy;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) since when the subsidized distribution has started;

(d) the rate at which it is being distributed; and

(e) how much subsidized edible oil has been distributed till date?

THE MINISTER OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI SHARAD PAWAR): (a) and (b) The Central Government has introduced a Scheme for distribution of upto 10 lakh tons of imported edible oils in 2008–09 with a subsidy of Rs.15/- per kg. through State Governments/UTs @ 1 kg. per ration card per month through PDS shops/other outlets as decided by them. Twentynine States/UTs which sought allocation of edible oil have been allocated edible oil under the Scheme. The edible oil is imported, packed and supplied by the Central PSUs to the States/UTs at the cost incurred minus subsidy.

(c) and (d) The Scheme has been formally launched on 28th July, 2008 from Andhra Pradesh. The issue price to consumers is decided by the Governments of States/UTs, the details of which are given at the Statement. [Refer to the Statement appended to the Answer to starred Question 15 part (d) and (e)]

(e) Under the Scheme, orders have been placed by Central PSUs for import of 3.48 lakh tons of edible oils. Till 13.10.2008, 2.39 lakh tons of edible oil have landed in the country and about 1.43 lakh tons have been handed over to various States/UTs by Central PSUs for distribution to ration card holders.

Unmanned level crossings

*19. DR. K. MALAISAMY: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) the number of unmanned level crossings currently in existence, Zone-wise and the number of accidents occurred there during the last three years;

(b) what are the measures taken to avert such accidents and whether they are adequate and effective; and

(c) whether there is any plan of action with a time-frame to avoid the use of these unmanned level crossings permanently by going for alternative infrastructure like over bridges/subways, etc.?

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (SHRI LALU PRASAD): (a) Zone-wise number of unmanned level crossings as on 01.04.2008, and the number of accidents occurred during last three years are tabulated below:

Zone	Unmanned level Crossings*	No. of accidents at Unmanned Level Crossings		
		2005–06	2006–07	2007–08
Central	503	1	–	–
Eastern	379	1	1	1
Northern	1923	3	–	4
North Eastern	1676	16	15	10
Northeast Frontier	1091	7	5	8
Southern	1237	1	2	–
South Central	1365	7	10	4
South Eastern	964	4	11	6
Western	2790	6	5	4
East Central	869	1	–	5
East Coast	906	3	9	5
North Central	626	3	3	4
North Western	1426	7	4	8
South East Central	772	3	1	3
South Western	882	1	3	1
West Central	331	1	3	2
Total	17740	65	72	65

*Excluding 'D' class cattle crossings and canal crossings.

(b) Measures taken by Zonal Railways to avert accidents at the unmanned Level Crossings include the following:-

(i) Public awareness programmes and publicity campaigns undertaken regularly to educate the ***road users*** for observing safe practices while negotiating unmanned level crossings. Joint ambush checks with involvement of civil authorities conducted.

(ii) Improvement to the surface of level crossings (LCs) near the railway tracks, approach roads with proper gradient for safe movement of the road vehicle users negotiating the LCs and providing proper road sign boards at the approaches including 'STOP' boards in English, Hindi and regional language to warn the approaching road vehicle.

(iii) Providing speed breakers/rumble strips as per standards on the approaches to level crossing gates.

(iv) Good quality retro-reflective road sign boards provided at the road approaches for improved visibility during night time.

(v) Level crossings, on reaching the laid down traffic volume criteria of manning, are being progressively manned. Manning Criteria revised in the current Budget year 2008-09 to include larger numbers of unmanned level crossings.

(vi) As a special measure to reduce the number of level crossings, Zonal Railways have been given power to consider and sanction 'Limited Use Subways' costing upto Rs.50 lakhs, and normal height subway costing upto Rs.1.5 crores on double line and 1.25 crores an single line, wherever technically feasible.

The effectiveness of these measures can be gauged from the fact that in spite of substantial increase in both road and rail traffic, the accidents have not increased substantially.

(c) Yes, to limit and reduce the number of unmanned level crossings, a systematic planned approach has been adopted; though no timeframe has been fixed, the efforts are being pursued, and include the following:

(i) Replacement of existing Level Crossings by providing 'Limited Height Subway' or Normal height Road Under Bridge/Subway wherever technically feasible. At present on Indian Railways, 547 locations have been identified to be replaced by 'Limited Height Subway'.

(ii) Closure of existing Unmanned Level Crossings – LCs where road traffic is low and nearby LCs also exists, the road traffic is diverted to one of them by provision of approach/link roads; closure of one of the level crossings where two or more level crossings exists in close proximity (within one kilometer). Efforts are ongoing for closure of the identified level crossings in close coordination with the State Governments.

(iii) In addition, Railways have decided to provide "Normal Height Subway/Road Under Bridges" at locations of manned level crossings or where unmanned level crossings have qualified for manning as per prevailing criteria of manning and are technically feasible. Cost of such Normal Height Subways shall be borne by Railways as Rs.1.5 crores for double line section and Rs.1.25 crores for single line section; cost of road approaches to be borne by State Governments/local authorities.

Wastage of agricultural food items

*20. SHRI M.V. MYSURA REDDY: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that as per Rabo India Finance Ltd. wastage of agricultural food items last year was to the extent of Rs. 58,000 crores;